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Letter dated 9 October 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the Special Representative of the Syrian National Coalition to the United Nations, Mr. Najib Ghadbian, dated 8 October 2016 (see annex).

I should be most grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**

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Annex to the letter dated 9 October 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the High Negotiations Committee, and as requested by the General Coordinator of the Committee, Riad Hijab, it is my honour to transmit to you a letter from Mr. Hijab, dated 8 October 2016, in which Mr. Hijab discusses the brutal escalation of violence in eastern Aleppo (see enclosure).

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian National Coalition
to the United Nations

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic]

I write further to my previous letters concerning the tragic situation that the Syrian people have been experiencing for almost six years. You will be aware of the barbaric assault that is taking place in the eastern part of Aleppo city. This brutal escalation has targeted defenceless civilians and deliberately destroyed hospitals, schools, markets and bakeries. All types of internationally prohibited weapons have been used, including armour-piercing and incendiary munitions, bunker busters, cluster bombs and phosphorus bombs, not to mention chemical weapons, which were used at an earlier stage. Some 300 civilians, one third of them children, have been killed in a single week. Hospitals whose capacities had already been severely curtailed owing to the siege declared by the regime and its Iranian and Russian allies have been destroyed. Some 300,000 civilians are living under siege in eastern Aleppo. As a result of the regime's stranglehold, indiscriminate bombardment and denial of humanitarian access, that population risks being wiped out completely. The wounded cannot find the medical assistance that they need in order to save their lives; most cases require transfer outside Aleppo for treatment and essential medical care. You will be aware that such situations are not limited to Aleppo; they are occurring throughout Syria.

The Security Council has adopted a number of resolutions on Syria, including resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2209 (2015), 2254 (2015), 2258 (2015) and 2268 (2016). However, owing to lack of United Nations oversight, those resolutions have not been implemented. The Security Council has not exercised its authority to enforce its own resolutions and bring an end to the daily slaughter of the Syrian people. The latter needs genuine protection from a tyrannical regime supported by sectarian militias and States that ignore those resolutions and disrespect the Security Council, despite themselves being members of the Council and having accepted its authority to maintain international peace and security.

The protection of civilians is a legal obligation for the United Nations, and both a legal and a moral obligation for its Member States. That much is stipulated in customary international law and in international humanitarian law, as set forth in the Geneva Conventions and the protocols additional thereto. The protection of civilians under international humanitarian law extends to the public and private property of civilians, and to actors attempting to assist civilians, such as medical units and humanitarian organizations providing food, clothing and medical supplies. Particularly vulnerable groups are also entitled to special protection under international humanitarian law; these include women, children, refugees and internally displaced persons, the sick, the wounded and the aged. Despite those principles, the Assad regime and its supporters have continuously and deliberately attacked international relief workers, civilians and civilian targets, including hospitals, schools and markets. It is therefore vital to put an end to impunity and prosecute individuals responsible for grave violations of international humanitarian and criminal law. Indeed, the 2012 Geneva communiqué specifically calls for accountability for acts committed during the conflict.

The tragedy of the Syrian people will last so long as the international community's silence continues to send the wrong message to the regime in

Damascus and its allies. The right message is that a binding resolution should be adopted, with immediate effect, to end the bombardment; allow access for humanitarian assistance; evacuate the injured and sick; put an end to the ongoing forced displacement and demographic change in Rif Dimashq, Homs, and other areas of Syria; and strengthen sanctions against the regime and its allies. Such action would bring genuine pressure to bear on the regime and its allies to respect the aforementioned Security Council resolutions or be held accountable for any violations. It would compel them to embark on the political transition provided for in the resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). That process would preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Syria, and ensure that all Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons can return to their homes. It would make it possible to build a democratic State based on justice and the rule of law — a State in which all components of the Syrian State would participate, and none would be excluded or marginalized.

(*Signed*) Riad **Hijab**
General Coordinator
High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian Revolutionary
and Opposition Forces